

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge,
McGregor District

McGregor, Iowa
Fiscal Year 1999

Jim M. Nam 3/13/02
Acting Complex Manager Date

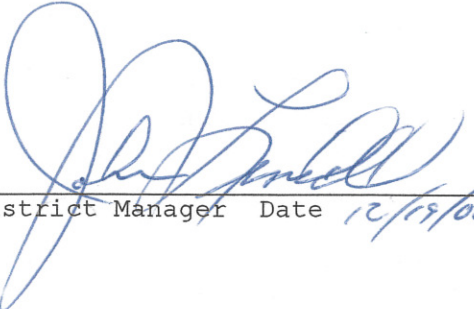
Don Kauffeld 3/28/02
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Vita M. Felt 5.15.2003
Regional Chief, NWRS Date

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge,
McGregor District

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District Manager Date 12/19/02

 12/23/02
Complex Manager Date

Regional Chief, NWRS Date

**UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER NATIONAL
WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE**

McGregor District
McGregor, Iowa

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

FY1999



INTRODUCTION

1. Location

The McGregor District is one of four districts comprising the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The District Office is located at McGregor, Iowa with Refuge Headquarters at Winona, Minnesota. This District contains parts of Houston County, Minnesota (8,651 acres); Grant, Crawford, and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin (37,495 acres); Dubuque, Clayton, and Allamakee Counties, Iowa (32,038 acres) for a total of 78,184 acres. The District covers navigation Pools 9, 10 and 11 and is 97 river miles long, extending from Dubuque, Iowa to Genoa, Wisconsin. Adjoining or nearby public land areas are: 1) Grant River Public Use Area, Potosi, Wisconsin; 2) Nelson Dewey State Park, Cassville, Wisconsin; 3) Pikes Peak State Park, McGregor, Iowa; 4) Wyalusing State Park, Wyalusing, Wisconsin; 5) Effigy Mounds National Monument, McGregor, Iowa; 6) Yellow River State Forest, Harpers Ferry, Iowa; 7) Blackhawk Park, Victory, Wisconsin; 8) Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Genoa, Wisconsin; 9) Fish Farm Mounds State Park Preserve, New Albin, Iowa, and several smaller access areas.

2. Topography

The Refuge lies within the Mississippi River Valley which is two to five miles wide and cradled between forested bluffs, rising up to 500 feet above the River. The elevation of the valley is approximately 600 feet msl.

3. Points of Interest

The McGregor District contains no large cities, but small river towns flank the river. Commercial fishing, clamming, and furbearer trapping provide income for some residents along the Refuge. Sport fishing is the most popular recreational activity, occurring every day of the year. Waterfowl hunters may travel over 200 miles to participate in opening day hunts on the Refuge. As a migration corridor, the Mississippi River valley may be unsurpassed in significance.

4. Physical Facilities

The McGregor District Office/Visitor Contact Station (DO/VCS) completed in July, 1986 is located in McGregor, Iowa. Warehouse/storage/shop areas are located at Cassville and Genoa, Wisconsin, and McGregor and Lansing, Iowa.

5. Driftless Area NWR

This narrative also includes activities conducted on the Driftless Area NWR. Although this Refuge is a separate land base with a separate budget it is administered from the McGregor District office. One full time employee is assigned to this Refuge. The Refuge was established in 1989 to contribute to the recovery and protection of the endangered Iowa Pleistocene snail and threatened Northern monkshood. The Refuge is currently 618 acres. A rare habitat type, algal talus slopes, provides a cool, moist microclimate for that is similar to those of the ice age. Many glacial relict land snails and rare plant species occur on these unique areas. In the future, a separate narrative will be completed for the Driftless Area NWR.

INTRODUCTION

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Highlights

- Forty eight active bald eagle nest were discovered on the Refuge (1.a.).
- Active great blue heron nests decreased in the District's largest rookery, while nesting great egrets increased(1.a.).
- Cricket frogs were discovered on the Refuge for the first time in 20 years (1.a.).
- Gutenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units utilized (3.b.).
- New Cooperative Farming unit established (3.d.).
- Two hundred and seventeen acres burned on Refuge (3.f.).
- District staff build eagle nest (4.d.).
- Ark floats Mississippi (5.a.,7.b.).
- New road planned on the Turkey (5.a.).
- Refuge Officers concentrate on summer patrols (6.a.).
- Driftless Refuge acquisitions submitted (6.g.).
- District visitation reaches 923,340 (7.a.).
- Prairie plants invade Visitor Center (7.a.).
- Waterfowl hunting success 1.95 ducks a day (7.c.).
- Volunteers flood the District (8.e.).
- Thirteen dead eagles found (9.a.).
- Cans peak at 328,025 (9.b.).
- Eleven Goose broods in Sun Fish Lake (9.b.).
- Three new faces on the District (8.b., 10).

1. MONITORING AND STUDIES

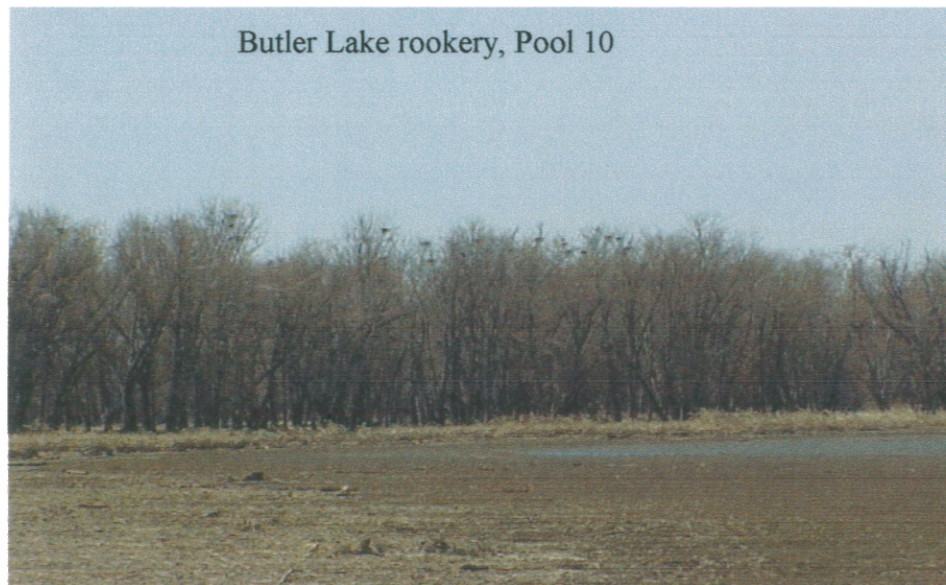
1.a. Surveys and Censuses

An informal eagle survey conducted on November 30th within Pool 11 revealed a total of 63 adult bald eagles and 87 immature birds. Another informal survey conducted in this same area on January 8th had similar results with 61 adult bald eagles and 34 immature eagles. A survey conducted by volunteer Mary Drenskohn on November 13 showed 106 eagles from Winona to Prairie du Chien as well as thousands of ducks and hundreds of tundra swans.

The Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey was completed on January 5. Most of the District was ice-covered. 311 mallards were counted at the Lansing Power Plant and a total of 217 bald eagles were counted in the District.

Forty-eight bald eagle nests were surveyed this year with 76 young produced and an average of 1.62 young per active nest. As always, the majority of the nests were in Pool 9.

Due to high water levels and insufficient staff, only the Butler Lake Rookery was surveyed for production this year for the colonial nesting bird survey. Water levels restricted survey methods to push-poling through the rookery which increased the opportunity for error. The other eight rookeries were confirmed as active but no census data were collected. The number of active great blue heron nests dropped from 774 in 1998 to 405 this year. Double crested cormorant nests increased from 116 in 1998 to 142. Great egret nests increased to 42 from 24. The average number of great blue heron young per nest was 2.1. Cormorant production was calculated at 2.7 young per nest.



The woodcock surveys were completed as part of the North American woodcock singing ground survey. No woodcocks were recorded.

Frog and toad survey routes for Pools 9, 10, and 11 were completed with

a total of 20 stations. Eight species were recorded including unusual cricket frogs at two locations in Pool 11. Cricket frogs have not been recorded on the District for twenty years.

District staff assisted headquarters staff with invertebrate sampling on Pools 9 and 10. A high number of zebra mussels were found at several locations including the Closed Area in Pool 9.

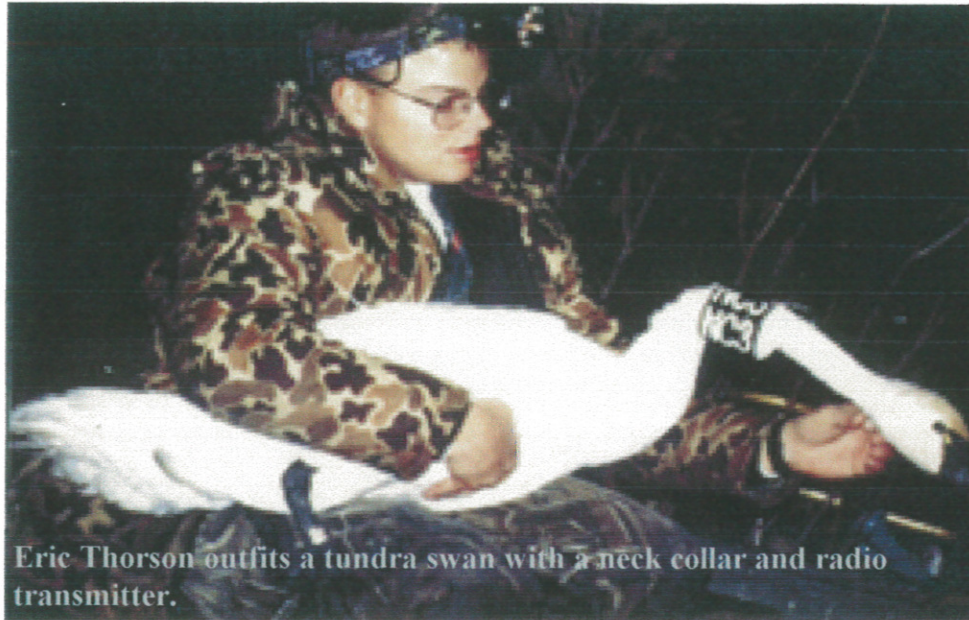


John Stravers completed red-shouldered hawk surveys on the District. Eleven confirmed nests were located in the District. During the last week of March several of the previously active red-shouldered hawk territories and some new suspected locations within Pool 11 were surveyed by call response tapes for activity. No new active territories were discovered.

1.b. Studies and Investigations

A response was sent to Jim Mattsson in the RO regarding wet meadow habitat on the Refuge. USGS out of LaCrosse will be conducting a study of these habitats in relation to migratory birds on Refuges. District Staff met with Eileen Kirsh of the USGS Environmental Management Technical Center on February 18th to discuss the management of wet meadow areas in the District. Eileen is proposing a study to document utilization of wet meadows by birds and the effect of burning/mowing on bird use within them. District staff gave Eileen a tour of wet meadow/grassland habitats that may be useful for her research.

Staff assisted researcher Eric Thorson capture swans in Pool 9 for a study out of the University of Minnesota. Four swans were captured, banded, and outfitted with transmitters on that occasion. Capture efforts occurred at night. Additional birds were captured over the season.



2. HABITAT RESTORATION

2.b. Upland Restoration

Box elder trees were removed from a portion of the Howard Creek Driftless Area Unit and attempts were made to mow one larger field full of box elders but they proved to be too dense for the bushhog. Plans were made to put this field into row crop next year to prepare it for native prairie planting down the road. This field has cool season exotic grasses and weeds and has been invaded by box elder trees. Several small prairie remnants exist on this unit that can be expanded by restoring the adjacent fields.

2.d. Other Habitat Management

On January 20th, ADM Male met with Consulting Engineers from the Clifton Lawson Company. The engineers were hired by the Village of Ferryville to investigate the possibilities of dredging the village boat ramp area and creating a harbor. As part of this project a dredge spoil site would be established off the river, but pipeline access would have to cross the Refuge. Their proposed project was dependent on state funding and our approval on access across the Refuge with a 16" pipeline. Because of the off-refuge aspects of spoils placement it was agreed that the Refuge would consider the request to cross Refuge ground. No work, however, on the part of the Refuge would be initiated until the state funding was secured.

On February 18th ADM Male met with Scott Gritters, Iowa DNR (Fisheries) in regards to several proposed projects in the Harpers Slough Area. One of the proposed projects involved the placement of gravity flow tubes within the Pool 9 dike. This would allow the flow of oxygen rich waters from lower Pool 9 to stagnant sloughs immediately below the dam. These areas have suffered from winter kill on several occasions through the years. Additional projects involve the dredging of sediments from

several historically rich fisheries areas.

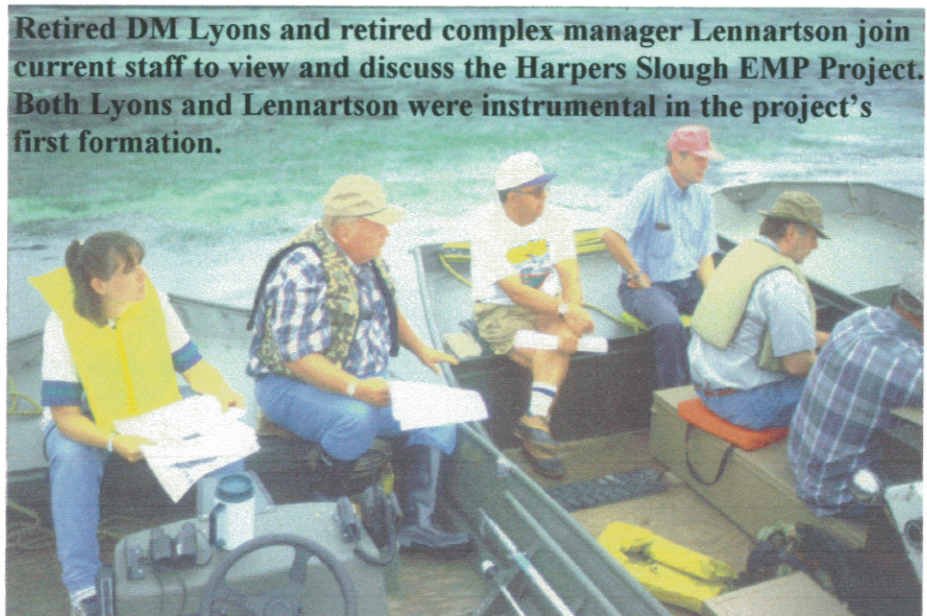
A Special Use Permit was issued for wood cutting at the Bertom Lake Boat Ramp on April 1st. The permit allowed a local resident to remove recently blown down trees in the area that cluttered the improved areas of the landing.

On April 14th, ADM Male met with Leni Mellick, City Engineer for the town of New Albin. The meeting took place at Mellick's request to seek assistance with problems related to the flow of the Winnebago Creek. The creek, under certain flow regimens, is hitting the waste water diked area. Mellick's concerns deal with the eventual erosion problem on the dike. It was also suggested that the Service did something in the lower watershed on the Refuge to cause this. Male advised the New Albin Engineer there would be little hope for the Service providing any assistance, given the fact of the location of the waste water treatment facility, and the fact that the changing flow patterns on the Winnebago Creek were natural and not man made.

During July, ADM Male spent a considerable amount of time locating and identifying significant fish and wildlife resources within the District for Mary Craig with the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center. The information is being used to develop a database for the Corps for modeling navigation impacts.

2.e.* Environmental Management Program

A section of the Lansing Big Lake dike that had washed out was repaired. The flood crew, ROS Henry, and a volunteer moved rock into the washed out area. Figures on HREP Operation and Maintenance costs for 1998 were given to EMP coordinator Beske. DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Mike Griffin and Scott Gritters, Iowa DNR and Conway Lake (Pool 9) to discuss the proposed Environmental Management Program project in that area on February 10th, and again on September 16th.



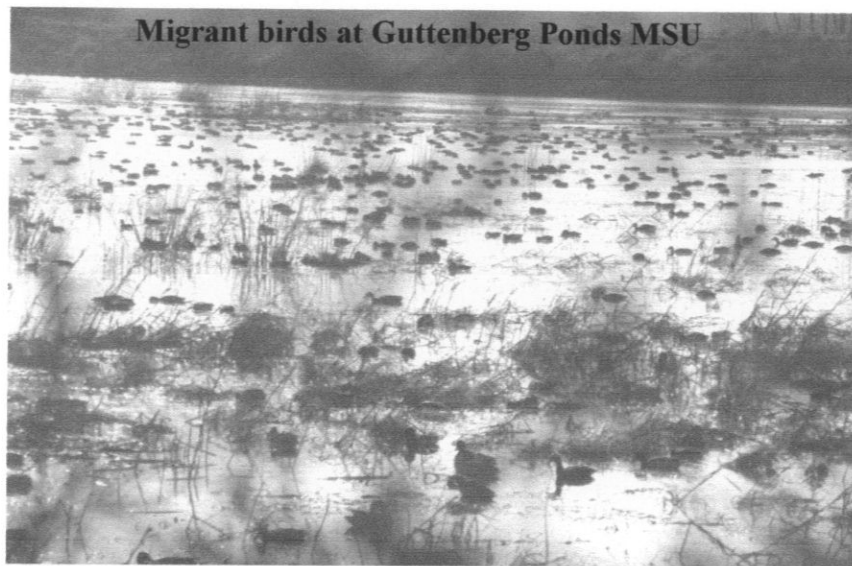
DM Lindell and ADM Male met with representatives from the IDNR, WDNR, Corps, and Headquarters staff on April 16th at the WDNR Office in LaCrosse, WI. The topic of the meeting was to address several of the proposed project features for the Ambro Slough EMP Project. As the project is currently proposed some of the dredging will have to be eliminated or curtailed because of overall project costs.

3. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

3.b. Moist Soil Management

Burrowing mammals were trapped at the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Unit (MSU) dikes to attempt to curb the damage being caused. Local wardens were advised of this action due to the methodology and trapping effort in a Closed Area.

On November 30th the Guttenberg Ponds MSUs had an estimated 5,650 puddle ducks utilizing them. Waterfowl use remained high until the units froze during mid December.



The Guttenberg Ponds MSUs were de-watered on March 31st to allow migrating shorebirds to use the units. Surrounding habitat in the area was recently flooded due to rising water levels making shorebird habitat scarce, and waterfowl habitat plentiful.

3.c. Graze/Mow/Hay

The Dago Slough abandoned agricultural fields were bushhogged on October 10th for the control of woody vegetation.

3.d. Farming

A new cooperative farming unit of 25 acres was added on the Howard Creek Unit of the Driftless Area NWR in an effort to control box elder trees for future prairie restoration.

Cooperative farming agreements were developed for the four Turkey River

Units. On May 19th flooding from the Turkey River and Mississippi River caused scarring in the Bittner & Wachendorf Unit.

3.e. Forest Management

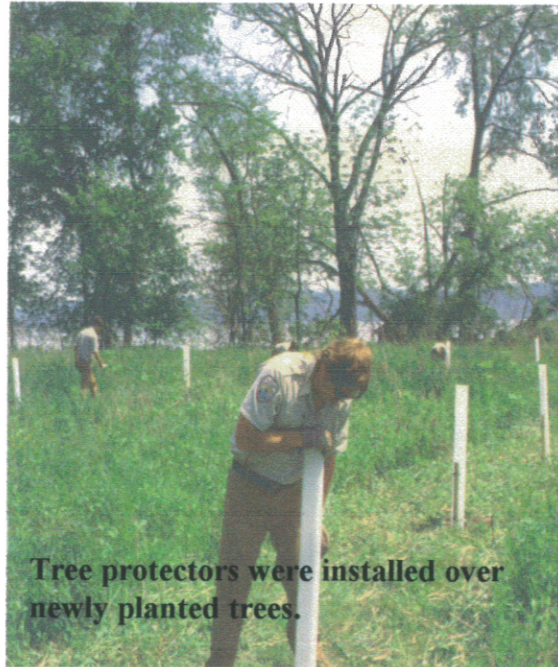
Additional trees (swamp white oak) were planted in the Patzner Field Forestry Management area in Pool 11. The trees were larger stock (~6') and were left overs from a project being conducted off the Refuge.

3.f. Fire Management

After requesting funds to fix the fire pumper from regional fire coordinator, Meredith Weltmer, the fire pumper was repaired for the spring fire season. One part had to be sent in to be rebuilt and other parts were replaced.

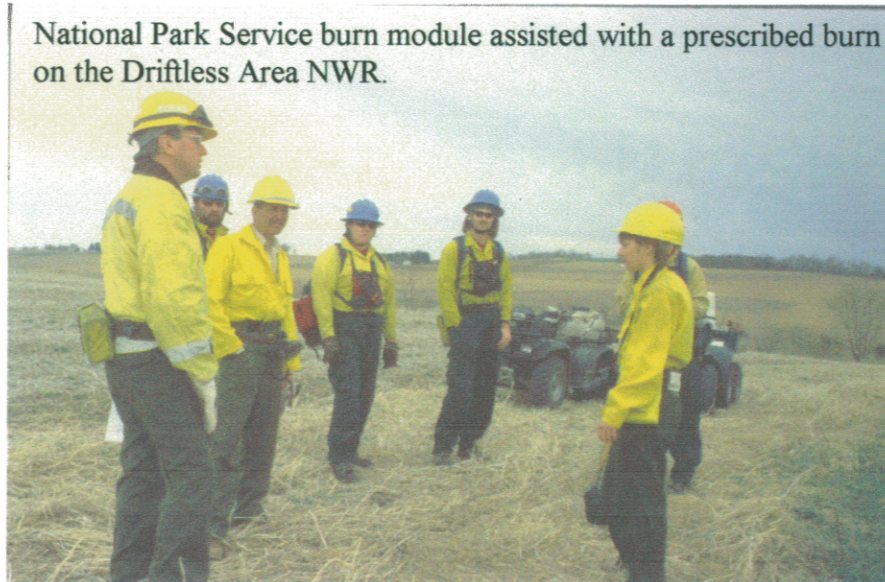
Several units were burned this year on the District and on the Driftless Area NWR. A total of 217 acres were burned. A National Park Service burn crew, the Buffalo River Prescribed Fire Module, that was in the area to assist Effigy Mounds National Monument, assisted with a burn at the Howard Creek Driftless Unit.

Three wildfires occurred this spring which required Refuge and local suppression personnel. These fires were at the Turkey River bottoms, John Deere marsh, and Mud Lake all in Pool 11.



Tree protectors were installed over newly planted trees.

National Park Service burn module assisted with a prescribed burn on the Driftless Area NWR.



3.g. Pest Plant Control

The annual weed survey was completed. Purple loosestrife was the only weed noted on the District. Leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and buckthorn were noted for the Driftless Area NWR. The annual pesticide use report was completed as well. Chemicals were used by the cooperative farmers at the Turkey River bottoms and for treatment of kiosk pads and parking areas on the Refuge. Leafy spurge was treated with Plateau herbicide at the Howard Creek unit of the Driftless Area NWR.

Rick Klann from Upper Iowa University again released *Galerucella* beetles for purple loosestrife control at the Cold Springs boat landing in Pool 9 and just north of Lock and Dam 9 between the highway and railroad tracks. Both of these sites displayed evidence of beetles having fed on loosestrife and adult beetles were observed.

4. FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

4.d. Nest Structures

On the evening of May 22, ADM Male responded to a call from a private citizen. The caller indicated that he had discovered a blown down eagle nest with two young in it while fishing that day. After visiting the site that evening Male placed the birds on an elevated root ball to avoid predation and get them out of the water. On May 24th ADM Male returned to the site and discovered that the birds were continuing to be cared for by the adults, but they were exposed to the elements without an overhead canopy and ground predation was still possible. On May 26th District staff returned to the location and after selecting a suitable tree, constructed a replacement nest within 20 yards of the original site. The nest consisted of 2 x 4s and fine mesh wire placed into several clustered maple trees at approximately 20 feet. The clustered trees were also cleared at the nest site to allow adult access to the nest. After capturing the eaglets to place in the nest one of the birds appeared to have an injured wing. The injured bird was sent to the MN Raptor Center, where it was discovered it had a broken wing.



The remaining bird was placed in the man made nest and checked periodically over the next week. The adults readily accepted the structure and continued to care for the young until it fledged later that season.

4.e. Pest, Predator and Exotic Animal Control

ROS Henry attended a gypsy moth meeting held by the Iowa Department of Agriculture for updates on this program in northeast Iowa. The McGregor Heights area behind the District office is infested with moths and was treated with pheromone flakes this year. No moths were captured on the Refuge, but Iowa would like to continue checking islands on the river to catch any movement of moths into the state.

5. COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

5.a. Interagency Coordination

Diversity outreach was conducted for the new ROS position. ROS Henry attended Team Training for the District as part of the Upper Mississippi River/Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem Team. Each Service office in the Ecosystem has a representative on the team.

ADM Male sent a response to Ecosystem Team Leader Rick Frietsche regarding mooring buoys and the lack of use by barges. Other Districts have also had problems with barges tying up to other structures or banks. The issue was discussed at the River Resources Forum.

Information was supplied to USGS on colonial nesting birds on the Refuge for a North American Colonial Waterbird Database Survey.

DM Lindell and ADM Male worked with Clayton County supervisors and Cassville Ferry interests to improve the Turkey River landing access road. The road is threatened by the eroding banks of the Turkey River. Portions of the public easement right of way for the road are now located in the Turkey River channel. The Service authorized a revised road alignment although this may be impacted by future plans for the Turkey River bottoms. When the Service constructs moist soil habitat or other improvements, then the access road could be incorporated on dikes or otherwise accommodated as part of the project.

The Nature Conservancy met with McGregor staff in McGregor to discuss joint efforts in the Driftless Area. TNC recently hired a new employee (Dave DeGeus) to work in Eastern Iowa after having no presence in the area for several years. TNC is interested in focusing on the Buck Creek watershed in Clayton County for protection efforts because this area fell out as a high priority in their conservation planning due to frequent occurrences of endangered species and high amounts of upland forest.

DM Lindell met with Effigy Mounds National Monument Superintendent Kate Miller to coordinate sister agency activities. DM Lindell also attended Effigy Mound's 50th anniversary celebration during August, 1999.

DM Lindell participated in the Hickory Creek Watershed Advisory Committee meeting and review of watershed conservation practices implemented on Hickory Creek, Allamakee County, Iowa.

DM Lindell attended the Iowa Department of Transportation Commission meeting in Decorah, with Steve Kolbach (Miss Marquette Casino) to propose IDOT funding for a proposed river front in the McGregor - Marquette area.

DM Lindell joined Iowa DNR biologists aboard the Corps of Engineers vessel M/V Mississippi on pool 10, to meet IDNR personnel and discuss river resource issues.

DM Lindell met with Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationists from Crawford and Grant County, Wisconsin and Clayton and Allamakee County, Iowa to discuss area watershed conservation issues.

DM Lindell attended the Iowa interagency peregrine falcon program coordination meeting in Decorah. DM Lindell met with Darrell Mills, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to share information about land acquisition goals and common interests.

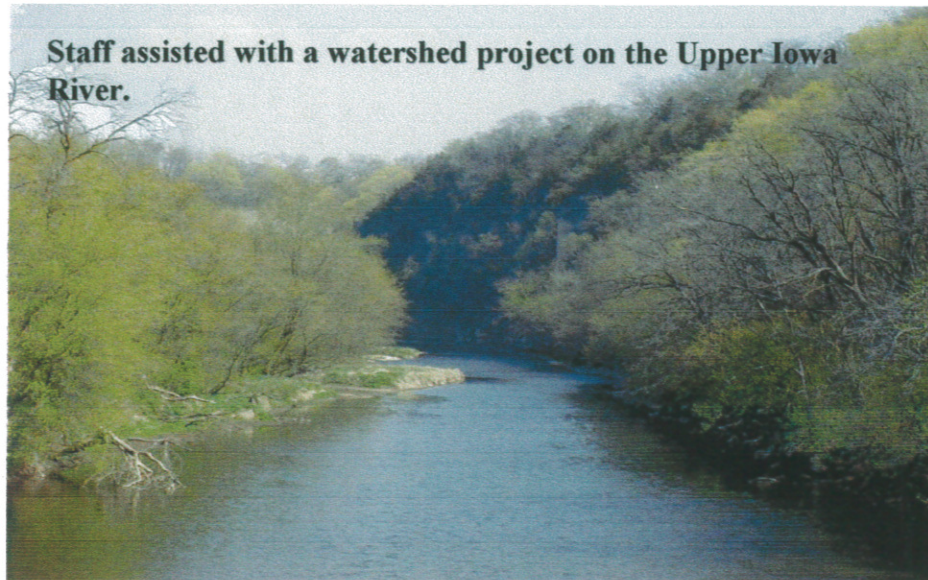
On October 26th, ADM Male, Trempealeau NWR Manager Frietsch, and Refuge Manager Fisher met with representatives from the Dairyland Power Company, and the Brennan Construction Company. The meeting took place at the Genoa Power Plant and involved the expansion of the barge fleeting area at the Genoa Plant. The only area of possible barge fleeting expansion is just south of the plant on Refuge ground. The possibility of a land exchange for the river front parcel and a large tract of land owned by Dairyland Power adjacent to Trempealeau NWR appears to be the proposed deal. That portion of the Refuge being considered for trade is currently a narrow strip of bottomland forest with an eroded steep shoreline. The proposed Trempealeau tract is part of the old Trempealeau Fur Farm, and considered to be one of the best privately owned wetlands on the Mississippi River. Terms of the trade will be investigated over the next couple months.

ADM Male attended a meeting on the Upper Mississippi River Campaign on the evening of April 19th. The event was sponsored by the National Audubon Society and was to draw attention to the problems affecting the Mississippi River.

ADM Male met with Potosi, WI Mayor Frank Fiorenza on April 29th. The meeting involved a search by Potosi leaders to find support from the Refuge for the Potosi Point Road Wildlife Area. The Refuge has supported the project all along, however, that does not translate into dollars. The project location is on Corps ground not covered under the cooperative agreement. But if and when the project is completed, the Service has agreed to management of the area as part of the Refuge. Potosi's search continues for a deep pocket.

5.b. Private Lands

A letter of support was sent to the Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development for a watershed project on the Upper Iowa River which was funded. ROS Henry attended initial meetings on this project.



ROS Loose visited a resident in Ferryville who was concerned with the town's ordinance to maintain the grass at a six inch limit. Loose sent a letter to the village board recommending that landowners who wish to maintain wildlife habitat be allowed to wait until after July 1 to mow to help nesting birds.

Agreements were signed for small wetland restoration projects in Grant County, Clayton County, and Winneshiek County during the year. A stream bank stabilization project was completed on Trout River in Winneshiek County. Seed was purchased for prairie restorations.

Challenge Grant funds were received for prairie restoration on the Birch Educational Farm in Dubuque County. This project was completed with the aid of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Dubuque County Conservation Board, Dubuque Fire Department, and the Four Mounds Foundation.

ROS Henry attended the Wisconsin Private Lands meeting in Madison.

ADM Male and ROS Henry met with Jerry Muff, District Conservationist with the NRCS Fayette County, Iowa on May 13th. Several possible projects were viewed and our future involvement in the County were discussed.

District staff established a defendable boundary on the Gott FMHA Easement on May 13th.

6. RESOURCE PROTECTION

6.a. Law Enforcement

Citations issued this year were as follows: two for unconfined pet, seven for fireworks, four for unattended boat, one for no observer in boat for waterskier, two for operating a boat in a reckless manner, and one for camping over the 14 day limit. Three NOVs were issued on the Driftless Area NWR for violating special hunting regulations by hunting

deer with a shotgun. Park Ranger Lescalleet from Headquarters assisted with several law enforcement activities on the District this year.

The annual law enforcement report was submitted for the District. Four theft cases were reported, 35 vandalism, 1 drug abuse violation, and 9 drunkenness violations. One traffic incident and 30 natural resource violations were reported.

The first annual Refuge-wide law enforcement coordination meeting was attended in LaCrosse by ADM Male and ROS Henry. Park Ranger Dave Lescalleet headed up the meeting to discuss many issues on the Refuge overall and coordinate what all Refuge officers are doing. New hunting blind regulations were proposed for Pools 4 through 11 this year after discussions at this meeting. The proposed regulation will not allow man-made blind materials to be left in the field. The materials must be removed at the end of each days hunt. Seasonal blinds made of natural vegetation can still be used. This regulation must be published in the Federal Register and will likely be in effect next year.

A landowner near the Heytman's landing in Pool 9 questioned the Closed Area line that was put in this fall since it was moved from its previous position. After much research, it was determined the closed line aligns with the section line. The section line was marked for the landowner and the closed line will remain at this location.

On February 4th, Refuge staff reestablished the IA/MN boundary line on the Refuge. New signs were placed along the boundary from the Minnesota Slough west to the New Albin waste water treatment plant so that the visiting public will know which state they are in.

RO Male investigated a complaint from Conservation Officer Webenger, Houston County, MN on February 9th. The complaint had to do with a possible illegal wetland development just off the Refuge boundary in the Winnebago Creek Watershed. After Male interviewed the contractor and landowner it was determined that the project was a NRCS project and all necessary permits were in order.

During the night of June 26th ADM Male received a relayed complaint from the Grant County Sheriffs Department at his residence. The complaint originated with a Refuge visitor with a cell phone who was on the Refuge witnessing a series of explosions. The explosions turned out to be high-tech commercial fireworks. The violators were apprehended and fireworks were seized in addition to two NOVs issued.

Refuge Officers marked camping equipment left on various beaches to save spots prior to the 4th of July weekend holiday. During the holiday weekend mid day temperatures ranged in the 95-100 degree range. Officers indicated it was one of the busiest in recent history. NOVs were issued for: leaving camping equipment unattended, underage alcohol possession, no observer in boat while waterskiing, and discharge of fireworks.

Notification of suspended trapping privileges was sent to four individuals because of violations of their trapping permits.

Refuge Officers worked the Wisconsin and Iowa duck season openers. Refuge officers teamed with headquarters officers Lescalleet and

Wlosinski to work a tip on waterfowl baiting in Pool 9. No case was made, but several hunters were checked. Refuge officers worked the Turkey River bottoms for spotlighters, but none showed up this time.

Boundary and site visits were made several times to the Driftless Area Refuge units.

Firearms instructor and RO Jim Brown re-qualified Savanna District officers.

RO Brown and Henry investigated a tip on tree cutting in Pool 10. The trees appeared to have been cut to clear a view lane for a house across the road. The trees had been cut several months ago and no leads from the adjacent homeowners could be picked up.

Refuge Officers worked the Memorial Day weekend in their respective Pools. Visitation was light due to high water covering many of the beaches.

MW Brown and ROS Henry visited a site near Harper's Ferry in Pool 10 with a local logger to verify the Refuge boundary line before logging on adjacent private property began. The corner posts were buried to within a couple inches of their top by sediment. The signs were replaced.

Vandalism was noted on signs/kiosks at Millstone and Winnishiek landings in Pool 9.

Enforcement patrols were increased in the John Deere Marsh area during July because of several roaming dog complaints. Two NOV's were issued on July 29th for roaming dogs in that area. One of the individuals was a repeat customer who refused the NOV through the Postal Service. ADM Male visited this individual at his place of employment where he graciously received it.

A new gate was installed at the private field where access to Patzner field in Pool 11 is gained. The landowner complained of people entering his field to get to the river. The District also wanted to curb entrance at this location.

Refuge Officer Male appeared in State court in Grant County, Wisconsin on November 19th. The case involved an individual that was apprehended by Male for not possessing the required fishing license while fishing on the Refuge. The case was turned over to state wardens who prosecuted the individual for the offense. During the course of the state's investigation it was learned that the defendant had a lengthy history of natural resource violations in the state. At the required court hearing the state sought and received a five year suspension of all natural resources privileges in addition to a fine of \$500.00.

ADM Male investigated a complaint on the Fish Float Operator (Don Bailey) in Upper Pool 10. The complaint alleged that the owner/operator (Under Special Use Permit) has been threatening fisherman that fish too close to his operation. This was not the first complaint of this kind dealing with this operator. Male also met with IDNR Warden, Bill Collins in regards to the issue. Based on the investigation ADM Male met with and advised the operator that the Service would not allow this type of behavior to continue. A line item in the Special Use Permit

laying out the Fish Float's rights to controlling other boat traffic will be included in future year permits.

MW Jim Brown's Law Enforcement authority was placed on hold by ADM Male on April 12th. Problems with an injury prevented Brown from requalifying at the last inservice, and his value in other non LE areas is a higher priority for the District at this time.

On April 13th, ADM Male investigated a complaint from a local citizen dealing with the removal of plants to sell from the Refuge. The investigation revealed that a local fisherman had been harvesting duck potato in the Bow Line Bay area in Pool 10. While the area was not officially part of the Refuge (acquisition pending final approval) the individual still did not have permission from the landowner. Based on the fact the Refuge was attempting to acquire the tract and no permission was given to the fisherman, he ceased all harvest activities in the area.

The Wisconsin DNR Warden for Crawford County presented an informal class to District Officers on September 28th. The topic of instruction was the sometimes confusing and always changing law on the legal use of conibear traps in WI.

6.b. Permits and Economic Use Management

A special use permit with special conditions was issued to Al Hanson for air boat tours. Permits were renewed for the fish floats in Pools 9 and 10 and for waterfowl guiding services for Tony Toye.

6.g. Land Acquisition Support

A response was sent to the RO for the Land and Water Conservation Fund Briefing Book regarding land acquisition projects for the Refuge. Information on the Biggins tract was sent to the Friends Group upon a request from the Audubon Society for nominations of sites for acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

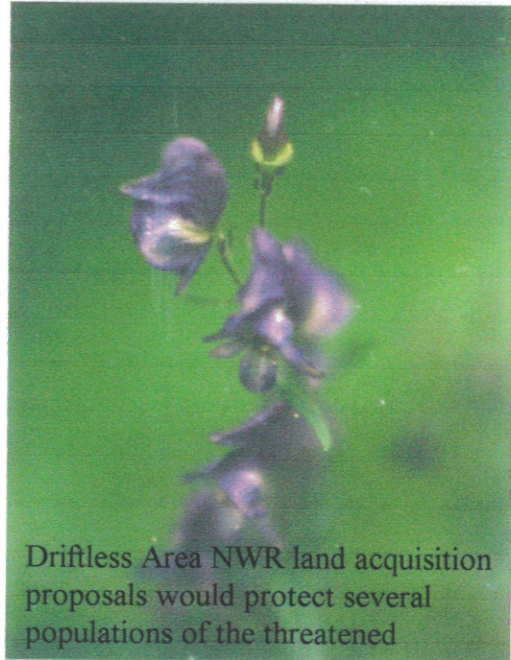
ROS Henry was contacted by a realtor about property for sale adjacent to an existing Driftless unit wondering if we were interested. After visiting the property and getting information from The Nature Conservancy, we were very interested. The site has significant sinkholes important to the functioning of the algific slopes on Refuge property. It also would continue a good riparian corridor along Cow Branch Creek and provide further buffer to the algific slopes. Due to the time frame involved, Peg Kohring of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was called to assist with the purchase of 85 acres. Unfortunately, the property went on a sheriff sale and went to the creditors of the landowner. The new landowner was contacted and assured ROS Henry that he intended only to use the land for recreation and was aware that there were special features there.

ROS Henry sent a letter to Mr. Raleigh Buckmaster outlining several land trade options. The Service is considering trading 8 acres of the Upper Miss Refuge for algific slopes with significant Northern monkshood populations. The Refuge tract is an extremely steep bluff side. A request was sent to Realty to follow through on the land trade. ROS Henry accompanied an appraiser from the RO in July to both properties.

An the end of the year, the appraisal was still being completed by Realty and had to undergo review. Mr. Buckmaster wishes to add the Upper Miss parcel to his surrounding bluffland and put the entire bluff into a conservation easement with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

ROS Henry and DM Lindell accompanied John Connors from the Realty office to visit the Plagmans who own an algific slope that the Service is attempting to acquire for the Driftless Area NWR. John was discussing the government benefits and offer with the Plagmans. The deal did not go through due to the Plagmans' inability to find other housing in Guttenberg.

Bob Drieslein from the Winona District completed a contaminant survey on the Adams tract in the Turkey River bottoms. The original survey had expired and Realty requested another before completing the acquisition.



Driftless Area NWR land acquisition proposals would protect several populations of the threatened

7. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

7.a. Provide Visitor Services

Challenge Grant funds were received to construct a trail between the Marquette/Prairie du Chien bridge with access at the existing parking area. The 1.5 mile Sturgeon Slough trail will be constructed through the bottomland forest and backwater wetlands.

Landscaping at the Visitor Center underwent some changes in the fall of 1999. The evergreen shrubs in front of the observation deck had been dying for several years and were therefore ripped out and replaced with native prairie plants. Students from Prairie du Chien assisted with the planting. The prairie planting will be more educational and will set a good example of native landscaping for wildlife to the visiting public.

Gravel was provided for the Potosi Point Road, but the Village of Potosi was notified that the



Volunteers help establish new prairie planting at the Visitor Center.

Refuge does not have funds to continue this activity. A letter of support for a pedestrian/bike trail between McGregor and Marquette was sent to the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Iowa DOT.

On March 2nd ADM Male met with Effigy Mounds National Monument Superintendent Miller in regards to an upcoming park event. The Refuge has agreed to hold an open house during the weekend of the event.

New rock was placed at the Cold Springs and Cassville landings. The signs at the Cassville landing were painted. Kiosk pads at Wyalusing and Bagley were installed and new gravel placed. The Turkey river landing and Bertom landing kiosks were painted.

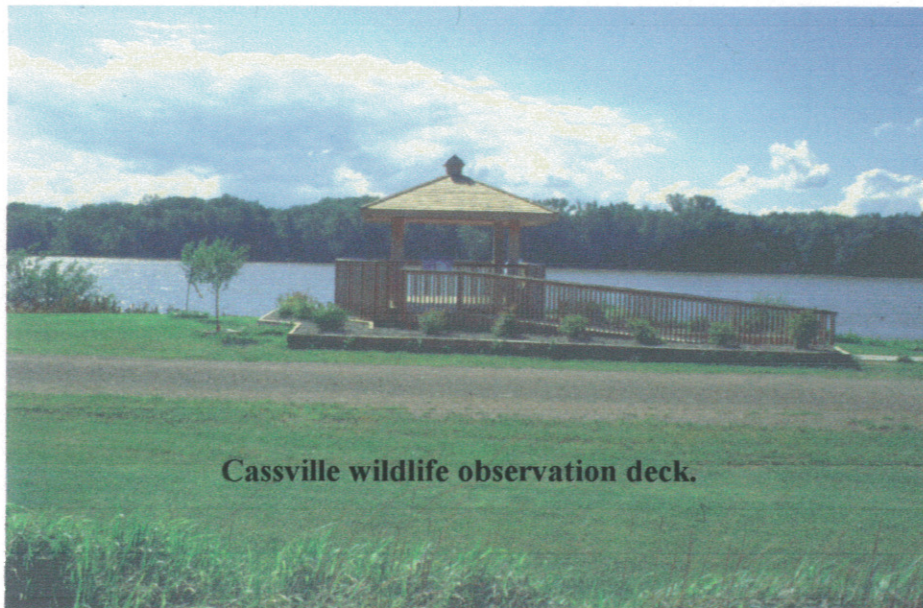
A new kiosk was placed at the boat ramp south of the dam at Guttenberg. Several kiosks were cleaned and repaired and new signs placed on them by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) workers. The JTPA workers assisted and completed many jobs this year working a total of 1671 hours for the District. They completed signing, worked on a lot of equipment and completed many maintenance jobs, fixed fence on the Driftless Area and cut brush and trees. An interpretive sign completed by headquarters and the sign shop was placed in front of the bat cave at the McGregor District office.

New road signs were placed for directing highway traffic to the Bertom Lake, Lynn Hollow, and the Bagley Bottoms Boat Landings.

A newly mounted osprey arrived at the Visitor Center after much waiting from the taxidermist in southern Illinois. The office and Visitor Center received new carpeting this year as well.

A challenge cost share grant was received for a spotting scope for the observation deck in Cassville, WI.

Additional gravel was stockpiled at the Patzner field location on September 1st. This gravel is used to service landings within Pool 11.



Cassville wildlife observation deck.

Pool maps and public use regulations were mailed to several individuals requesting them for hunting or fishing.

Contracts for portable toilets and snow removal at Bertom Lake were completed.

On May 5th ADM Male attended a meeting about the Trail Between Two Cities. This is a project to construct a walking trail between the towns of Marquette and McGregor. The Refuge supports the basic project because of additional exposure for the Refuge through the Visitor's Center. However, much about the details and construction ability of the project have not been addressed.

RMIS information for the Public Education & Recreation Report was submitted to Winona on October 29th. A total of 923,340 visitors enjoyed the Refuge in some capacity during FY 1999. Fishing was the most popular activity, with an estimated 457,000 visits recorded during the season, followed by beach and water use with 185,000 visits.

Professional photographer Al Sheldon from Winona, Minnesota visited the District for a Refuge wide photo shoot on May 24th. Al shot 15 roles of 36 exposure during the course of the day. Snakes and turtles were his favorite subject, but several photos of great blue herons and other wildlife rounded out his day.

7.b. Outreach

1999 marked the 75th anniversary of the Upper Miss Refuge. The Audubon Society conducted an 'Audubon Ark' tour of the River from LaCrosse to Dubuque with stops at river towns along the way. District staff helped greet the public and answer questions at towns in the McGregor District.

Recommendations for the revision of the Refuge Bird List were sent to headquarters.

Information for the Regional outreach briefing book was reviewed for the District and the Driftless Area NWR.

The District's first newsletter, called McGregor District News, was completed and sent out to local communities and contacts just prior to National Wildlife Refuge week. Newsletters were also completed in January and June.

ROS Henry gave a presentation about the Refuge to the Waukon 9th grade biology classes. A group of Boy Scouts from McGregor were given a tour of the John Deere marsh where they were thrilled to see eagles through the spotting scope. The boys also picked up trash at the site. The Garnavillo High School biology class visited the Howard Creek unit of the Driftless Area NWR to learn about prairies, stream life, and algific slopes. MFL MarMac first grade visited the Visitor Center for a program on the Refuge. A program about wildlife habitats was given at the Garnavillo public library for their summer reading class. ROS Henry gave a presentation at the Effigy Mounds Hawk Watch in September about laws protecting raptors.

Several school activities took place for National Wildlife Refuge Week. A Garnavillo High School biology class learned about prairies at the

Howard Creek Unit of the Driftless Area NWR. Garnavillo third graders went on a hike and learned about bugs, plants, deer, prairies, and many other things also at the Howard Creek Unit. A hay ride was held for the Cassville sixth grade in the Dago Slough bottoms. A talk was given to the MFL MarMac 8th grade biology class.

On May 8th ADM Male met with Cedar Rapids Cazette reporter Orlan Love. Love featured the Mississippi River and the Refuge in a feature article during May. On June 16th, photographers from the Cedar Rapids Gazette spent the day on the Refuge developing a story on the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units, and the eagle nest construction that the District staff had completed.

ROS Henry gave a tour and interview to a Cedar Rapids Gazette reporter which featured algific slopes and the Driftless Area NWR in their outdoors section in a June edition. The piece was well done without revealing too much about these sensitive areas. A semi-professional photographer visited the Driftless Area to take photos for the Friends Group for a traveling display about the Upper Mississippi River Refuges.

ROS Male met with Raad Cawthon from the Philadelphia Inquirer on November 18th. Cawthon was compiling information for a story on eagles on the Mississippi River. Male spent hours discussing the eagles comeback on the river and eagle biology in general. On January 6th a reporter with the Cedar Rapids Gazette interviewed ROS Male for a story on Eagles on the Mississippi River.

On August 12th, ADM Male visited with Congressman Kind's (WI) Office in regards to an upcoming meeting on the Potosi Point Project. The Refuge's position of support has not changed since the project started, however, Potosi clientele still think the Refuge has the pocketbook on this project. The area is located off Refuge on Corps ground that will become part of the Refuge when completed. The contact was made with Kind's Office because DM Lindell and ADM Male were not available for the meeting.

ADM Male was interviewed by the Guttenberg Press on August 12th about a construction project in Pool 11. The project, which was requested by the Refuge and IDNR, was to address the problem of blowouts on Twelve Mile Island. This valuable main channel island is being dissected because of the head differential between the main channel and Cassville Slough. Rock was placed at several locations by the Corps to stop the cutting erosion.

7.c.* Hunting

Hunter success was tabulated from contacts with 223 hunters in the field at 1.95 ducks per hunter per day. The mallard harvest increased significantly from previous years. The season was mild until a storm on November 10 with wind speeds in excess of 75 mph which produced odd sightings of waterfowl and other migrants and was the real start of the waterfowl migration.

7.d.* Trapping

One hundred trapping permits were issued this year compared to 155 in 1998.

On February 25th ADM Male contacted Minnesota DNR in regards to the proposed new otter trapping season, which would include the Refuge. The District has expressed concern with this season given the fact no one can actually say how strong the population of otters is on the Refuge. In addition there is a strong following among the Refuge and public that otters provide much more than a pelt, and are viewed as one of the treasures on the Refuge.

7.e.* Fishing

During the last two weeks of September, reports from local fishermen indicated that the fishing within the Cold Springs EMP project site was phenomenal. Catches of up to 55 keeper blue gills in the 9" size had surfaced. The boat landing during this craze was packed full, forcing boaters to park great distances from the launch ramp.

8. **PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION**

8.b. General Administration

The RCAR data was submitted to headquarters. Information on the Year 2000 compliance for the District's computers was sent to the Regional Office. The annual energy report, fourth quarter vehicle mileage, semi-annual motor vehicle usage, and annual automotive equipment reports were completed.

Office furniture for the trailer was picked up from the Regional Office. This was excess modular furniture that was free and was a good fit for the trailer. ROS Henry and BT Henkenius reside in the trailer and it is used for meetings and storage.

The flood crew's appointments were done in December of 1998. These employees completed much needed landing repairs as well as general flood cleanup work.

AT Palmer gave projected FY 99 Fixed Expenses to headquarters at their request.

The in-house property list was updated.

ROS Henry attended the three-week long Refuge Academy at NCTC.

The Refuge-wide meeting was held at the Savanna District and attended by all staff except AT Palmer.

During March and April a considerable amount of time was spent by ADM Male interviewing candidates for the two positions vacant at McGregor. After much fan fare a candidate was selected for one of the positions and the required paperwork was submitted to the RO. Unfortunately after a change of faces in the personnel department we were advised that the good diversity candidate we had selected could not be hired. After starting the process all over that candidate could not be reached again under personnel guidelines.

Tim Loose was selected for the vacant ROS position in McGregor. Tim, who is no stranger to Refuges, will cover may neglected areas that current staff could not devote sole attention to. Tim spent much of May

getting to know the District.

ADM Male met with Bill Barbee from the Burlington Northern railroad on May 12th. Topics included Refuge staff utilizing the railroad tracks to conduct maintenance duties on the Refuge boundary. Additional time was spent discussing agriculture crossings and the Refuge's needed access to these areas.

8.c.* Safety

The quarterly drinking water sample was submitted for analysis. Monthly safety meetings were held with topics ranging from safe driving to winter safety to ladder safety. ROS Henry and JTPA workers Greener and Wilker were all certified in tractor safety by Bill Davison from the Savanna District.

The annual safety inspection was completed in May. No major problems were noted. A memo was sent to the regional office outlining the corrective actions taken from nine findings of the Environmental Compliance Audit in August.

ADM Male, ROS's Loose and Henry attended a course at the Sherburne NWR on explosives for use in trapping. This class was required in order to use rocket nets for waterfowl banding.

On July 9th ADM Male cut his hand while driving a sign post on the Refuge. The cut required stitches and Male's wife drove him to the hospital for the repair. No work time was lost.

8.d.* Maintenance

MMS projects were submitted. The leaking roof at the shop and replacement of boats and motors were priorities for the District and fencing was a priority for the Driftless Area NWR.

District staff rebuilt the lower unit on the Cassville 60 Mercury motor during August.

8.e.* Volunteer Program

Two JTPA workers were hired to work on storm cleanup projects at the Refuge. JTPA received storm damage funding from severe storms in 1998 for Clayton and Dubuque Counties. Bruce Greener, a former employee at the Refuge, and Ken Wilker from Garnavillo, were hired to work 1040 hours. These hours were again extended in the summer so that they were able to work into the fall.

Tom Sandersfeld was selected as Volunteer of the Year for 1998. Tom conducted frog and toad surveys for the Refuge. A luncheon was held in Elkader where he lives and he was presented with a few items of appreciation. Sally Steele and Dennis Kirshbaum were also recognized for their contributions in the past year, primarily conducting songbird point counts.

Drew Buckmaster from Simpson College in Iowa volunteered most of the summer and assisted with many projects.

Job shadow student, Mitch Linder, from Garnavillo High School assisted with Lansing Big Lake Dike repair and Guttenberg Ponds water management.

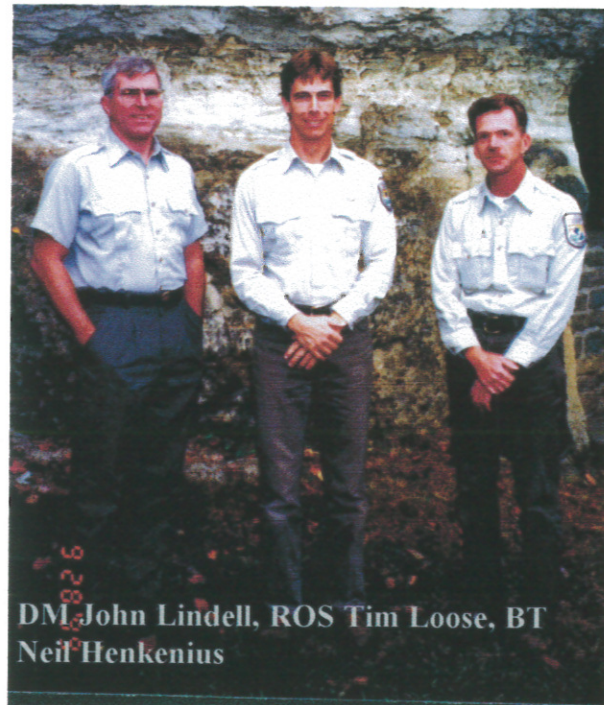
Volunteer Patrick Henry documented a fish kill in Minnesota Slough, Pool 9.

The volunteer services report was completed for the McGregor District and the Driftless Area NWR.

ADM Male attended a Volunteer Coordinators Meeting at the LaCrosse District Office on March 17th. The only thing that was apparent during the meeting was that the District needs someone that has time to dedicate to this task, but as of now there is only a choice of two and we both have full plates. This will become the task of the new ROS at McGregor.

8.f. Personnel

Wishes for more staff were fulfilled this year with three vacant positions finally being filled. District Manager John Lindell moved here from Alaska in August to replace Doug Mullen who retired and to relieve Clyde Male who was acting for nearly three years. ROS Tim Loose arrived in May from Sherburne NWR, and BT Neil Henkenius arrived in September from Mark Twain Refuge.



9. WILDLIFE

9.a. Endangered/Threatened Species

Thirteen dead bald eagles were handled this year with some sent to the National Wildlife Health Center and some to the Eagle Repository. Causes of death included unknown, lead poisoning, electrocution, and hit by vehicle. Four bald eagles were transported to the Raptor Center. One was diagnosed with lead poisoning and the others had injuries.

ROS Henry provided information to the Rock Island Field Office on potential pesticide impacts to the Iowa Pleistocene snail for an EPA pesticide consultation.

ADM Male conducted a survey of a spoil disposal site at the Agri Grain station in McGregor for mussels at the request of the Rock Island Field

Office.

Endangered species recovery funding was again received from the Rock Island Field Office to conduct Northern monkshood monitoring on the Driftless Area NWR. Janet Ries was contracted to conduct monitoring on several sites. "Closed Area" signs were ordered from the sign shop for the Driftless Area units as many of the existing signs are faded and difficult to read. Several fences were repaired on Driftless Area units.

During the first three weeks of November, a peregrine falcon was observed numerous times feeding and loafing on the Refuge between the towns of McGregor, IA and Prairie du Chien, WI.

9.b. Waterfowl

The peak waterfowl count for the District was on November 5 with 328,025 counted on the aerial survey. There was a peak of 192,620 canvasbacks and 9070 swans on Pool 9 on November 18. Scaup peaked at 73,255 on November 5.

A major movement of waterfowl occurred on November 12th. Observations from throughout the District indicated that migrants were taking advantage of the strong NW winds to propel themselves to the south.

The first migrating divers of the 1999 season appeared on the District on February 10th. Within a week scaup numbers reached 1,800 in lower Pool 9. Observations within this same area on February 24 revealed an estimated 3,500 divers. Survey information within lower Pool 9 on March 2 indicated that diver numbers had reached 5,500 birds. By March 11th an estimated 8,000 divers were counted in this area.

On March 30th, an unusual diving duck concentration of approximately 2,500 birds was noted in deeper water (>6') just south of the bridge span on the east channel within Pool 10. The birds remained in the area for weeks often forming tight feeding flocks as they worked the expanding abundant zebra mussel beds in the area.

Migrating Canada geese flocks were first observed on the District on February 10th. The first observations recorded for tundra swans within the District during 1999 occurred on March 16th.

Large flocks of puddle ducks were observed throughout the District on March 2. Their concentrations were restricted to melted marsh fringes due to persistent ice within the backwaters. By March 29th puddle duck numbers were in the thousands throughout the District. Water levels had risen in Pools 9,10, and 11 flooding previously unavailable habitat.

During the beginning of April wood duck pairs were observed throughout the District searching for nesting cavities, including those unlikely locations in the heart of the various towns and cities up and down the District.

Numerous small flocks of ruddy ducks were encountered throughout the lower half of Pool 9 in open water areas on April 20th.

The District's first goose brood was observed in the Harpers Slough area

on April 28th. On May 29th goose broods of: 6,4,6,8,4,4,2,7,4,5,5, were observed within the Sunfish Lake area of lower Pool 11.

A flock of 60 snow geese was observed in the McCartney Lake Closed Area on September 20th. This sighting was unusual because of the time of year and the fact very few snow geese use the District except as incidentals in other waterfowl flocks.

Three neck collared trumpeter swans were sighted in Pool 11 on May 19 on Jack Oak Island. The information was forwarded to John Wetzel with the Wisconsin DNR.

Waterfowl nesting information was received from John Wetzel of the Wisconsin DNR for 1999. Twenty-two goose nests and one mallard nest were found in the Pool 9 Closed Area, 11 goose nests and 1 mallard nest were found in Pool 11.

9.c. Marsh & Waterbirds

The first great blue heron of the 1999 season was observed in lower Pool 11 on March 3rd. An informal survey within the Goetz Island Rookery on March 30th revealed that approximately 98% of the GBH nests were occupied by birds. Great egrets were observed for the first time this year within the District on that same day.

Sandhill cranes were observed at the Quality Beverage tract in Pool 10 on April 13th. Additional birds were observed on the Wisconsin River Delta and in the New Albin area also during April.

The first double-crested cormorants of 1999 were observed in lower Pool 11 on March 30th.

Large migrating cormorant flocks, in the hundreds were observed during the first week of October.

The District's first American white pelicans of the season were observed in lower Pool 11 on April 1st. By April 20th concentrations in the hundreds were noted in lower Pool 9. Large concentrations in lower Pool 9 around the Pool 9 Island EMP project were common throughout the early fall.

9.d. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns & Allies

The first herring and ring-billed gull concentrations of 1999 were noted on February 22. Exposed sandbars throughout the District were favorite locations to find these new migrants. Bonaparte's gull migrants did not reveal themselves until a month later.

The season's first build up of shorebirds was noted on March 30th within the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units. Common snipe were also encountered at that time.

Black tern concentrations were first noted within the District this spring on May 24th.

The first push of migrating caspian terns captured the attention of Refuge visitors on September 2. Their striking colors and loud calls

seldom go unnoticed.

9.e. Raptors

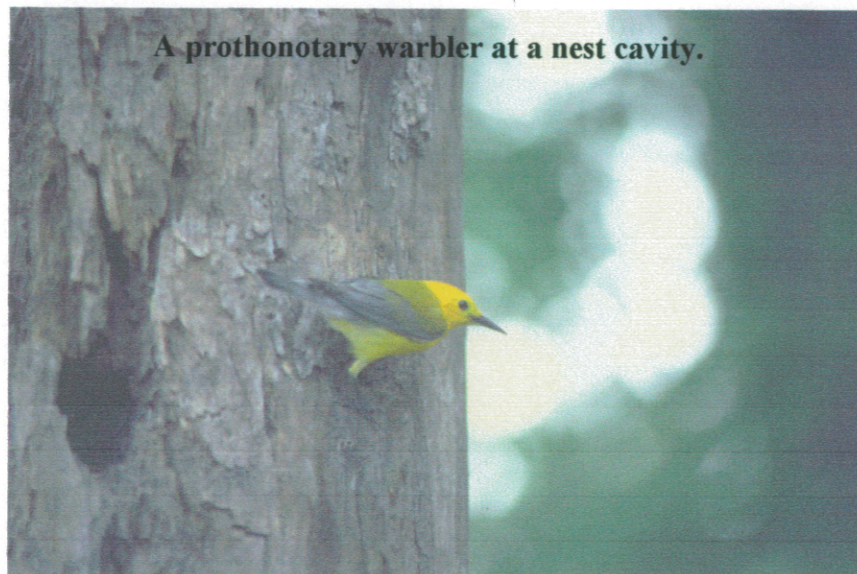
The first significant fall movement of raptors was observed on October 10th.

A strong push of northern harriers to the north was observed on February 22.

The first south bound osprey of the migration was noted within the District on August 31st.

9.f. Other Migratory Birds

The first eastern bluebirds of the 1999 season were observed on March 26th. Tree swallows were first observed four days later.



9.h.* Other Resident Wildlife

One Eastern Pipistrelle bat was found using the recently opened bat cave at the McGregor District Visitor Center.

During the late winter/early spring a flock of about 30 turkeys were observed on several occasions utilizing the open fields for foraging at the Quality Beverage Tract.

The often overlooked invasion of migrating monarch butterflies on the Refuge appeared to have peaked on September 13th. Their numerous bodies seemed to be captured between the bluffs, as they fought the air currents of the Mississippi River floodplain.

9.i.* Fisheries Resources

A fish kill was reported by the Iowa DNR in Minnesota Slough, Pool 9. Volunteer Patrick Henry visited the site and took photos. No cause was

determined and it was suspected to be from commercial fishermen as it was mostly drum.

10. Items of Interest

ADM Male and ROS Henry attended the National Wildlife Refuge System Conference in Colorado. The main goal of the conference was to provide input to the Fulfilling the Promise document for the Refuge System.

ArcView GIS software was obtained this year and ROS Henry attended training to learn how to use it. Lara Hill from LaCrosse assisted the District in getting started with GIS. The goal is to enter many of the features from both the District and the Driftless Area Refuge into GIS for management purposes. We have begun collecting UTM coordinates with a GPS unit for eagle nests and other features.

Staff responded to many requests from the RO regarding Y2K issues for computers and other equipment.

11. Climatic Conditions